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July 14, 1999

President Clinton
The White House
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I need your help. In September 1996, the US harvested its first batch of genetically engineered crops. In the past 30 months our government has approved more than 40 genetically engineered organisms for commercial distribution impacting over a third of our corn and soybean crops and over 60% of our processed foods. These foods have never been tested for long-term safety. Nor are they labeled. All over the world government leaders, scientists, food industry members and consumers are urging the United States to exercise caution in the unfoldment of this technology. Yet we keep ignoring their pleas. Instead, we send high-ranking officials and biotech industry representatives to force these countries to bend to the corporate will of the United States and threaten to bring any nation who disagrees with our policies before the World Trade Organization.

I find it indefensible that my government refuses to allow other nations the right to choose not to import these foods. As a country that stands up for human rights around the world, we must support the right of people everywhere to vote "No" on this issue. This behavior diminishes us all and brings shame to our nation.

Genetically engineered foods are experimental. Enough reputable scientists and physicians, both here in the US and abroad, consider them to be potentially hazardous to our health and ecosystem. I don't want to eat them. Nor do I want to feed them to my children. I find it outrageous that my government refuses to support my right to eat the foods I want to eat, to proper safety testing, thorough and appropriate risk assessment protocols and truthful labeling.

My family is caught in the middle of an international debate. The people I love have been turned into guinea pigs in the largest food experiment of all time. When qualified scientists disagree, the US government has no scientific grounds for claiming unilaterally that these foods are safe. So please don't send me a form letter stating that the FDA believes they are safe. It will not do.

As an American, I ask that the Clinton administration:

- Return my right to make informed choices in the market place
- Require the mandatory labeling of all GE foods
- Establish an immediate 5-year moratorium on the release of genetically engineered organisms.

During this time I ask that you create an independent review board to:

- Scientifically assess the hazards of genetically engineered organisms (GEOs) to human health and the environment;
- Evaluate the cultural, economic and ethical impacts of the technology;
- Structure a program and set of procedures to evaluate every individual GEO before it is approved for commercial distribution on any level.

This board must have:

- Scientists and consumers, none of whom stand to benefit in any way from the promotion of this technology;
- Legal authority to prohibit the marketing, sales and planting of any and all GEOs;
- Authority to create policies for small-scale field trials of GEOs.

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Mr. President, you are known throughout the nation as a man who holds his family and the environment very close to his heart. As a Democrat, you are known for supporting the rights of the little people. But you have aligned yourself with the big guys on this one and left the rest of us out of your thinking and without your protection. I urge you to remember your responsibility to the American people and serve us now. And if you find the pressure from the industry too much to bear, please just be a father and safeguard the food supply and secure the genetic heritage of the earth for your children.

Sincerely,


Lori Altman



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